

THE PALADIN

Lurking in the shadows like a hooded mask of death
Appraising passersby for weakness, fear, unrest
Ready at a moment's call to pounce, attack, defeat
Any form of evil prowling any city street

I've seen The Paladin, at best a brief encounter
Occurring in such lurid haste I'm obliged to wonder
If indeed gratitude belongs to another
Who placed himself in jeopardy while I vanished undercover

In a time of blatant crime, valor intervenes
Employing neither gun nor badge, agenda nor deceit

Some say he's a predator on a path of pure vindiction
To others he's an outlaw inviting contradiction
Arriving without notice he's a suped up everyman
Who carries justice in his heart, fights until the end

The line between a hero and a man who strives to be
Separates civil duty from personality
An alpha male will seize the day, then his just reward
While The Paladin breezes in, asks for nothing more

To serve us all he wanders municipalities
Fleshing out wanton lust and urban malady

Some say he's a junkie with a Mephistophelean call
To others he's a champion of ancient Celtic law
Arriving without provocation he's the savior of the day
Who carries justice in his heart, holds evil at bay

Cursing near the entrance of the Local Twenty-Two
Where engine seizure stranded me on Western Avenue
No taxi on the curb, no cruiser in my sight
I began a steady pace beneath jagged neon lights

A toolbelt strapped around my waist, a watch, some change, my keys
Little had I to oblige a sidestreet robbery

Some say he's a conspirator with a tell tale sense of time
To others he's a bitter member of the thin blue line
Arriving without beckoning he's a wonder in disguise
Who carries justice in his heart while danger's on the rise

Rising out of darkness strode The Paladin
Pouncing between right and wrong but to his chagrin
Their number far outweighed him, afraid, I ran for life
Leaving him to perish beneath a moonless winter sky

Drumbeats, swelling, panting breaths, blurred lights swerved the street
Survival of the lowly, in debt to word and deed

Some say he's a victim in the worst of times
To others a recidivist and punishment fit the crime
Arriving without question, he's a hero long denied
Who carries justice in his heart even as he dies

Eight months of survival, guilt weighs on my mind
Criminals roam the jungle, valor's in decline
Our cities lay in ruin and peril rues the day
Evil downed a forthright man while a coward ran away

Lurking in the shadows I cloak a mask of death
Appraising passersby for weakness, fear, unrest

Some say I'm a fallen angel Gabriel lionized
To others I'm the spirit of a savior canonized
Arriving with a vengeance to redeem a cardinal sin
I carry justice in my heart like a reborn Paladin